

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Kaupin in the Enfield Room of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Wednesday, March 11, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Arnone, Cekala, Deni, Edgar, Hall, Kaupin, Lee, Mangini, Stokes and Szewczak. Councilor Bosco was absent. Also present were Town Manager, Matthew Coppler; Assistant Town Manager, Derrik Kennedy; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki; Chief of Police, Carl Sferrazza, Director of Public Safety, Christopher Bromson and Captain Fred Hall

Present from the Enfield Board of Education were Peter Jonaitis, Timothy Neville, Raymond Peabody, Stacy Thurston and Lori Unghire. Vincent Grady, Tina LeBlanc, Thomas Sirard and David Wawer were absent. Also present were Superintendent, Jeffrey Schumann and Deputy Superintendent, Christopher Drezek.

DISCUSSION RE: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR SCHOOL SECURITY

Chairman Kaupin stated the purpose of this meeting was to review the results of the public sessions and understand what the action items and timeline would be if it's decided to renew an MOU.

Mr. Coppler distributed an inclusive document that shows all the comments made at each of the four public comment sessions.

He stated from his perspective, they've done everything they can to provide feedback from the public, as well as from experts to show what has happened, what is being done, and some of the improvements that need to be made. He noted it's now up to the elected officials to make a determination on what the MOU is. He stated unless there's a desire to modify that MOU, it's his recommendation to move forward with just updating the dates on the current MOU and having that as the discussion point for the Board and Council.

Mr. Coppler stated one of the things that he heard during public comments was the desire to have more visible hardening done. He noted they always had the concept that they're putting together a facility plan for all buildings, and they are still thinking that could be a referendum in November. He stated as they went about doing the work with the buildings, they were conscious of the fact that they were going to be doing that project. He stated his belief they could do some combination with that facility plan by doing more hardening improvements that they may not have contemplated as part of the facility type improvements, but he feels it gets them a lot closer to where they need to be.

Chairman Kaupin questioned whether there are any comments regarding the four public comment sessions.

Mr. Neville stated it was clear that people agreed on the quality of the guards. He noted there's a level of mistrust that came out on the way it was done. He noted the security meetings are held on Wednesday mornings, and those meetings always go into executive sessions. He noted it would be helpful to do whatever they can to make those meetings more open and transparent to people. He stated his belief people have a lack of knowledge, and that results in suspicion. He suggested having those meetings at 7:00 p.m. instead of mornings, and agendas should be clear and open, except those few times when they do need to go into executive session. He feels this may help to eliminate some misunderstandings or suspicion.

Councilor Stokes stated he totally agrees. He noted the last couple security meetings were in open session. He stated early on there were executive sessions because they were dealing directly with sensitive areas. He noted he's willing to have evening meetings, but they need to determine whether it's going to be monthly or bi-weekly because there are so many other meetings that committee members are involved in.

Mr. Peabody stated he got feedback from PTO people and comments he heard related to the number of Enfield Public Schools teachers who were present to speak versus private school teachers who spoke. He noted some teachers felt intimidated. He stated there's a rumor that a communication went out about not talking. He noted this rumor came from parents and not teachers.

Chairman Kaupin questioned whether parents were conveying that the school administration, the Board of Education or the Town Council stated they should not speak. Mr. Peabody stated they weren't specific, but he said he wanted a copy of the email if this rumor is true. Chairman Kaupin questioned if it was an email that went out, and Mr. Peabody responded some were saying it was an email that went out to the teachers, but he has no corroborating evidence.

Mr. Jonaitis stated, as a former teacher, there have been times in the past where the association has cautioned teachers regarding getting involved in local political or controversial issues.

Chairman Kaupin referred to the action items/timeline. He noted for consideration they have an MOU currently in place. He questioned whether they move that MOU forward, and that becomes the basis of the conversation. He noted through conversation, things can be changed, but it's also understood that there is a deadline. He stated the deadline from a Town perspective is based on the adoption of the budget, which happens in mid-May.

Mr. Neville stated his belief they should quantify what the public told them.

Chairman Kaupin stated there is a Governance Committee that was formed years ago, and this is a monthly meeting attended by the Town Manager, Superintendent, the Mayor and Board Chairs. He noted they discuss joint issues, and they then move them to their respective parties for resolution. He stated at the last Governance meeting, they talked about the potential referendum on facility improvements. He noted a lot of what people are asking for concerning the hardening of buildings really becomes part of that referendum. He noted they would then bring back to the respective bodies exactly what staff is thinking about for that facility improvement referendum. He stated there are definite hardening components that will be part of that referendum because of the dollar expense. He stated there's a tentative date for a Governance Meeting next week. He noted they will start to hash out some of these things before they start talking about the MOU.

Councilor Deni stated the public should know that even if they eliminated the School Security Officers, the program will continue in some form.

Councilor Stokes stated the key thing is that the security committee will continue moving forward to keep the students as safe as possible. He noted personally, he is an advocate of having the SSO's because he does not believe the buildings are where they need to be, however, a referendum may move that along. He added there will always be gaps in security, even with SSO's, but the bottom line is that with all the legs in the table in play, which is procedures, policies, training, hardening and SSO's, students are extremely safe, and he would like to keep those components in place.

Mr. Peabody stated prior to an MOU decision, he would like to see what kind of sustainability plan they have in place. He noted he'd like to see a better communication plan. He stated depending on how things go, they should have an exit strategy and what would be the build out or build up of the program if it continues.

Councilor Stokes stated his belief they're improving communications. He cited the four forums as an example. He noted as soon as they know what's going to happen, the School Security Committee will meet and begin to strategize the next step and keep the Board and Council informed.

Mr. Peabody stated he would like to see a written strategy in place before they get to a vote.

Councilor Mangini suggested everyone have a copy of the MOU, and Chairman Kaupin requested a copy be distributed to everyone.

Councilor Arnone stated in the beginning he voted in favor of this program knowing they'd be looking at it again at the sunset clause. He stated he's proud of what they did and where they are, and he feels it had to be done at the time. He questioned where they will get their say in this and funnel it into the committee to see what his constituents are saying. He distributed correspondence which reflects the problems that he sees. He noted he would like to see this program evolve into a smaller program for the SSO's and

he'd like to see a re-writing of the job descriptions for the SRO'S. He noted there needs to be more training for teachers and administrators, and the SSO's need to be directed more into training. He stated another issue he feels they've failed to address has to do with mental health issues. He proposed the Board consider putting that issue on the table and start some intervention programs. He feels they need to balance the mental health along with the security and hardening. He stated he'd like to see a school mental health assessment team put together by the Town of Enfield, which consists of a team of mental health professionals that can go school to school and do assessments and take recommendations from administrators and look for risk factors such as substance abuse, trauma, depression and anxiety and treat these things inside the school system. He stated to keep him on board with this, they really need to address the mental health issues. He stated he also needs to see more training for staff and faculty members.

Councilor Hall stated she sees a 60-40 split in favor of the SSO Program. She noted some of those speakers were repeats for a lot of the meetings. She stated the one thing she heard consistently from a lot of people against the program had to do with the dollars. She noted she requested the Town Manager put together a flow sheet to be distributed this evening. She stated this flow sheet shows how much is spent on students per year, and security alone amounts to 1.2% and this amounts to \$153 per year. She feels 1.2% is miniscule in the grand scheme of things to keep students safe. She noted she is an avid supporter of this program, and she feels it's a shining star for the State of Connecticut and all municipalities that are taking this example and implementing it in their own towns, and Newtown is one of those towns.

Mr. Neville stated he looks at this as a budget issue because it's one piece of a very complex and expensive budget in a town that has historically not had a lot to spend. He noted 1.2% may be a small number, but what percentage is going to the Town side in terms of the Town functions because everyone has their list of needs and wants. He feels they have to strike a balance in terms of the School Board and the issues with the Town departments and the needs that they have and try to find a middle ground. He acknowledged everyone wants the children safe, but how do they afford that and how do they do this over time.

Mr. Peabody stated the local contribution to the school budget is about \$35 million dollars, and the rest comes from the State and federal grants. He stated he'd be very interested in seeing a breakdown of this program showing the local contribution.

Mr. Jonaitis acknowledged a lot of people did a lot of work on this program, and they did the best they could. He stated from the very beginning, he felt this was a reaction to what happened in Newtown. He noted they spent time with the Chief of Police and the people working with him, and from the start they were being called experts. He feels they were far from being experts, but he acknowledged they've learned a lot from where they were to where they are now. He stated his hope people have not taken Mr. Dorn hook, line and sinker. He suggested researching Mr. Dorn and expressed doubt this person could have accomplished all that he says he did. He stated this is a nice program, it makes a lot of sense, and it would be nice to do, but affordability is crucial. He questioned whether this

program is keeping students safer in school. He noted when a guard is on the playground, the school is now vulnerable or vice versa. He pointed out most massacres in schools are usually done by white kids and kids who have an ax to grind, and such kids have thought things out very carefully. He feels serious thought should be given to this. He noted they are not making the kids as safe as they think because there are sporting events, concerts and art shows. He stated in schools, students are under the supervision of teachers, and most teachers will lay down their lives for their kids. He feels there are so many other ways they can use the money, i.e., addressing mental health issues.

Mr. Peabody stated two years ago he spoke in favor of the SSO's, but now he has questions. He noted when he looks at Sandy Hook, the difference in elementary school deaths in the past 25 years shows 35 children losing their lives, and of that number 28 were from Sandy Hook. He feels this program is an outstanding solution to that problem, but how they move forward is what he is struggling with, which has to do with cost, benefit and how they do it. He questioned whether they're reacting to an anomaly and how real is it. He stated a lot more happens in a high school. He noted in the past 25 years, there were 91 deaths in high schools and 26 deaths in middle schools due to gunfire. He noted there is merit to having personnel in front of the school and he's not wavering in any way, but questions how they best mitigate that. He stated he's looking for input from everyone.

Chairman Kaupin questioned whether people accept the idea of the Governance Committee meeting, and in that way they can discuss the facility plan, the hardening components, sustainability, communications, etc. He noted they can then get the information back out to the full Council and full Board.

Councilor Lee questioned if there's a quick pro-forma that can be done on the mental health component and what that might look from a budgetary, staffing or policy perspective. He stated he would like to see what this looks like standing on its own.

Referring to Councilor Arnone's correspondence and the suggestion of the Town considering youth counselors, Chairman Kaupin questioned if that proposal is on the Town's side through the Youth Services Department. Councilor Arnone responded that goes back to Council goals where he brought this up, and this would be to do a better job of meshing the Board of Education with the Town of Enfield in the mental health area. He pointed out the Town and Board have separate programs that help each other right now, and there's a lot of collaboration because of the suicide prevention committee that exists. He noted there has been more collaboration over these past two years than when he suggested this two years ago. He pointed out the collaboration does work, but they really have to strengthen that and work within, especially with Special Education, the counselors and psychologists that they already have on board, along with the youth services coordinator that the Town has on board. He stated they could use so much from each to make it very reasonable budget-wise, however, someone has to lead the cart. He noted if they have two departments going their separate ways, it won't work.

Mr. Neville commended Councilor Arnone for his ideas. He noted the mental health issue is key. He agreed this is a great discussion item, and they need to find out all that's involved.

Councilor Arnone stated in the future the guidance counselors need to be a part of the mental health umbrella of the school and town-wide systems.

Councilor Mangini stated they do have a suicide prevention program, but she's not sure what the parameters are. She questioned how that program would have any influence or bearing on what they're looking to do. Chairman Kaupin stated that program has built a foundation because it brought the collaboration of the Town, Enfield Public Schools and the agencies at the state and local levels including the critical component of law enforcement. He stated there are identified needs that the steering committee doesn't necessarily address. He noted the school climate component, such as Rachel's Challenge and all the spinoffs from that program that the students and administration of each building is promoting, is going well. Referring to the training components, Chairman Kaupin stated they can't train someone enough. He referred to Councilor Arnone's suggestions and stated his belief that would be where they're getting the additional trained resources to actually be able to work with the students and the staff.

Councilor Stokes stated they can design this so that it is holistic. He believes they should have a town-wide coordination when it comes to youth services across the spectrum.

Mr. Jonaitis stated the Town has control of the buildings, and the school system has control of some programs. He noted Enfield has kids who are hurting mentally, who are frustrated, confused or involved with drugs. He stated if they had an alternative school where they could take a lot of these kids and work with them in a concentrated effort where they could bring in social workers or any counselors they wish, they could perform miracles. He noted it will be found that these kids have a lot of common faults, i.e., they're illiterate, and when kids can't read, frustrations bloom. He stated teachers have a big effect on students, but the students go home and in cases that's a problem. He concluded stating the biggest thing that they can do is alternative education.

Councilor Arnone stated in the past when the alternative high school was at Asnuntuck, it cost the Town a lot of money. He agreed the alternative high school does work. He noted he knows people who attended the alternative high school who were on the road to jail, but are now successful. He stated his hope they can look at this when there's extra room.

Councilor Hall referred to Councilor Arnone's presentation and stated a lot of these things are being done. Councilor Arnone agreed. Councilor Hall stated these are all good suggestions, and these are things that the Committee has been pushing from the beginning.

Mr. Peabody stated it helps having a time line for everything.

Councilor Hall stated Gary Harrison is working on a list of items for immediate hardening using state grant funds.

Mr. Peabody questioned when they can expect to see an MOU for discussion, and Chairman Kaupin stated the current MOU will go out to everyone.

Councilor Stokes requested the Governance Committee keep the parochial schools involved.

Councilor Deni stated at Prudence Crandall he made a statement about the parochial schools in that he was under the impression they were not getting grants. He stated he would like to see what the parochial schools have done as far as hardening.

Councilor Stokes suggested perhaps Councilor Deni could make an appointment to visit the parochial schools, and he'd be happy to go with him.

Mr. Neville stated it's very clear that there were separate MOU's for the parochial schools, and the school system could not spend Enfield Public Schools' money on those schools. He stated his belief hardening money is actually coming from the archdiocese.

Councilor Stokes stated the Town of Enfield applies for their grants, and those grants come to the Town of Enfield, and the parochial schools applies for their grants from the archdiocese. He added his belief the parochial schools can also apply for state grants. He noted the Town of Enfield cannot invest any money into those schools, and that has not been done. He stated just as the Town provides transportation, they also provide security. He added the Town can also require that they have their buildings at a certain standard so that the SSO is safe along with the children, and that's been accomplished.

Chairman Kaupin stated at Monday's regular Town Council meeting, there will be two resolutions transferring funds for school security totaling \$937,000, and of that amount \$640,000 came from the State with the balance coming from Town funds. He stated some of that work has already been done, and this is just the paperwork component. He noted the second resolution actually has funds for partially done work as well as new proposed work.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #3058 by Councilor Mangini, seconded by Councilor Arnone to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #3058** adopted 10-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 8:10 p.m.